



**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**

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476 gang members, associates and other criminals were put on ICE during Project Big Freeze

Milwaukee accounts for 21 arrests made during national gang initiative

MILWAUKEE – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced Wednesday the arrests of 476 gang members, associates and other criminals nationwide. Agents seized 47 firearms as part of Project Big Freeze, an intensive ICE-led law enforcement operation executed in 83 cities across the country focusing on gangs with ties to drug trafficking organizations.

In the Milwaukee metropolitan area, 21 individuals were arrested Jan. 19 – 21 as part of this nationwide gang initiative. Of those, 14 are in ICE custody and are pending removal proceedings. The remaining seven were arrested by the Milwaukee Police Department on outstanding warrants and state drug charges.

All 14 individuals in ICE custody are Mexican nationals who are members or associates of the Mexican Posse street gang. Twelve of the 14 are in the U.S. illegally; two are lawful permanent residents whose criminal convictions render them eligible for deportation. Most of those arrested have extensive criminal histories; some of their convictions and arrests include: carrying a concealed weapon, theft, robbery with use of force, reckless use of a firearm, and drug possession.

Among those arrested in the Milwaukee area last week were:

- A 26-year-old illegal alien from Mexico who was arrested by ICE agents Jan. 20. As a Mexican Posse member, his criminal history includes convictions in Milwaukee for theft-movable property and additional arrests for possessing cocaine with intent to deliver, carrying a concealed weapon, and violating a restraining order. He remains in ICE custody pending removal from the United States.
- Also on Jan 20, ICE agents arrested a 40-year-old illegal alien believed to be a leader of the Mexican Posse gang in Milwaukee. He is in the U.S. illegally and has prior convictions for drug possession and was previously arrested for attempting to flee law enforcement. He remains in ICE custody pending removal from the United States.

“Street gangs pose a growing public safety threat to communities throughout the Milwaukee metropolitan area,” said Gary Hartwig, Special Agent in Charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in Chicago, which oversees Wisconsin. “ICE will use all our law enforcement tools to thwart criminal efforts of street gangs. Operation Community Shield shows how ICE works with our law enforcement partners to dismantle these criminal organizations and help protect our communities.”

“Our strong working relationship with our federal partners like ICE allows us to conduct operations that help us get dangerous criminals off our streets and keep us on track with our mission to reduce crime, fear and disorder,” said Milwaukee Police Chief Edward A. Flynn.

Through Project Big Freeze, ICE agents worked side by side with our federal, state, and local law enforcement partners in a coordinated, national initiative against transnational criminal street gangs in the United States. Locally, ICE and the Milwaukee Police Department were assisted in the operation by the following agencies: U.S. Marshals Service; Wisconsin Department of Justice – Division of Criminal Investigation; Milwaukee High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Task Force; and the Waukesha police department.

Transnational street gangs have significant numbers of foreign-national members and are frequently involved in human smuggling and trafficking; narcotics smuggling and distribution; identity theft and benefit fraud; money laundering and bulk cash smuggling; weapons smuggling and arms trafficking; cyber crimes; export violations; and other crimes with a nexus to the border.

Of the 476 arrests, 207 were arrested for criminal offenses and face prosecution for various federal and state crimes including narcotics smuggling and distribution, firearms violations, identity theft, aggravated assault, obstruction, entry without inspection and re-entry after deportation. Of those arrested, 151 were U.S. citizens and 366 were foreign nationals and face deportation either now or when their criminal prosecution is complete. In addition, ICE agents arrested another 41 individuals on administrative immigration violations.

Like any street gang, these transnational gangs also have a propensity toward violence. Their members commit a number of violent crimes including robbery, extortion, assault, rape and murder.

Nearly 50 percent of those arrested during this operation were members or associates of gangs with ties to drug trafficking cartels in Mexico, South America and Asia.

The National Gang Unit at ICE identifies violent street gangs and develops intelligence on their membership, associates, criminal activities and international movements to deter, disrupt and dismantle gang operations by tracing and seizing cash, weapons and other assets derived from criminal activities.

Operation Community Shield partners with existing federal, state and local anti-gang efforts to share intelligence on gang organizations and their leadership, share resources and combine legal authorities to arrest, prosecute, imprison and/or deport transnational gang members.

Since inception in 2005 to date, ICE agents working in conjunction with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies nationwide have arrested more than 16,144 street gang members and associates. Of those arrested, 202 were gang leaders and 2,898 were MS-13 gang members or associates. Through this initiative, ICE has seized 949 firearms. To date, of those arrested, 6,805 have been charged criminally, and 9,339 have been charged with immigration violations and processed for removal.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities. For more information, visit: www.ICE.gov. To report suspicious activity, call 1-866-347-2423.